Correlates of Subjective Well-being Among the Adolescents of North Bihar

Ph.D. Synopsis Report

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1 Introduction

Since time memorial, happiness has been one of the mainstay of human civilization, denoting its prosperity and development in almost all the sphere of life. Even with the advancement of new and rapid technologies in the 21st century industrialized world, one of the major quests of human beings it to seek happiness by all means. Socrates once said that ultimate goal of human life is happiness and till today this statement holds true given the amount of research, developments, and zeitgeist of the present-day world. Past researches in Psychology have delve deeper and deeper in finding the drivers/factors of happiness. The emergence and the dominance of positive psychology in current era is a living testament to it. The conceptualization of happiness in psychology has been carried out through the framework of subjective well-being (SWB; Delle Fave et al., 2011) and justifiably so. The first and foremost reason being the nature of happiness per se among human beings. What makes one happy, may cause unhappiness to others! Individual differences play a decisive role in experiencing happiness. Besides, happiness is fleeting in nature, indicating the role of temporality in its experience. Considering all these, the present study will position SWB at the fulcrum of happiness.

One of the most crucial and life-defining stage in any individual's life is her or his adolescent years where s/he experiences a complete transformation in probably all the spheres of life - physical, social, emotional, and professional. Be it the family expectations and bonding, friends and peers' growing influence, one's own identity exploration and question, mounting expectations, wants, autonomy -- every aspect of it undergoes an unprecedented and tremendous change.

WHO (2018) consider adolescence period from around 10-19 years. An evolving phase of life, adolescence represents a transition phase from being a boy (girl) to a man (woman). Of late, adolescents are now categorized in the age range of 10-24 years, considering the

preference towards elongated education, late marriage, hence late adulthood (Sawyer et al., 2018). Considered one of the most volatile phase in human life's, it is characterized as a stage denoting identity vs identity confusion (Erikson, 1963). Erikson noted that an adolescent mind is essentially a mind or a moratorium, a psychosocial stage between childhood and adulthood, and between the morality learned by the child, and the ethics to be developed by the adult. An adolescent is constantly juggling between acquiring two sets of roles—either carrying the status quo as being that happy-go-lucky chap, playing and wandering all around or else go on acquiring all that has been learnt throughout the lived life and establish her/himself as a mature evolving adult. Such parallel running thoughts are so strong and deep, that if left unresolved, could lead onto 'identity crisis'.

2. Rationale

According to the Census (2011), more than half of the Indian population are adolescents, making it the most youthful nation across the globe. Moreover, India is home to nearly one-fifth of the entire adolescent population globally. Within India, Bihar emerges as second most youthful state after Uttar Pradesh (Bihar Economic Survey, 2019). According to the survey, 2.34 crore of population of Bihar are aged between 10-19 years and 11.8 million in the age range of 18-23 years, representing approx. 22.5 of the total population of Bihar. Such favorable demographic dividend can only be leveraged upon in the nation and state interest by understanding their aspirations and addressing their concerns and well-being. They are the future bedrock and workforce on whom the progress hinges. Until and unless, their present is safe and secured, we can't project and even think of an inspiring future. However, their recent past and presence has been rocked by multiple concerns and apprehensions further exacerbated by the catastrophic COVID-19 pandemic. Reports have posited adolescence as one of the most stressed-out generation with the most suicidal rate in the world (APA, 2023; WHO, 2019).

WHO (2019) found that in India the suicide rate is double than that of world average. In 2021 alone, almost 60,000 young people died of suicide (NCRB, 2021). Such dismal picture of our young people warrants attention on a priority basis in order to provide them a psychological safe and secure environment. This will be achieved only when their own subjective viewpoint will be addressed, their demographics, personality, and preferences will be known. Considering this, the present study while adopting the mixed research of qualitative and quantitative methodology, will unravel the correlates of adolescent's SWB. By employing both the etic and emic perspective, the study will cater to the factors of SWB and explore the list of what make them happy.

3 Review of Literature

3.1 Subjective Well-being (SWB)

Diener et al. (1999) referred SWB as people's affective evaluations of their positive affect (PA) and negative affect (NA), and their cognitive judgment of satisfaction with life (SWL). Going by this definition, SWB is based on two components: (i) *affective domain* comprising of positive affect and negative affect, and (ii) *cognitive domain* comprising of satisfaction with life (Ryan & Deci, 2011). While the former implies an affective evaluation, emphasizing the prominence of positive affect over negative affect, the latter denotes the cognitive evaluation of one's life. SWL centers on the person's own judgement of their life regarding how satisfy s/he is with the current state of life vis-à-vis own set criteria and standard (Diener, 1984). This evaluation is internally evaluated and not externally done by some external agent. SWL is central to understand subjective well-being.

SWB has been conceptualized in two types of well-being: (i) **hedonic well-being**, premised on maximising pleasure, minimising pain, and having a satisfied life, and (ii) the **eudaimonic well-being** is premised on cultivating virtues, relationships, and having a purpose and meaning in life (Ryan & Deci, 2001). Diener et al. (2010) further added a fourth component called flourishing (FL) to incorporate the eudaimonic well-being and continuity in life to grow and prosper. A person with high SWB is frequently happy, infrequently sad, generally satisfied with his or her life (Biswas-Diener, Diener, & Tamir, 2004), and constantly flourishing.

3.2 Demographic Variables and SWB

Extant studies have found direct, yet conflicting relationship of demographic variables significantly affecting SWB. Studies have found age, gender, education, income, family typology significantly influencing SWB across the age group. In some of the studies, women tend to report more NA than men (Costa et al., 2001 while in others, men and women do not differ on NA (Louis & Zhao, 2002). However, women are found to experience higher SWB (Chakraborty et al., 2019; Sharma et al., 2015) than men.

Commonsensical notion says that higher income relates leads to more positivity and hence higher SWB. As the old idioms says that money can't buy happiness, this appears to be true, mostly in developed countries or affluent societies. Having money increases resources, which in-turn lead to PA. But only to an extent when the needs are met (Diener & Diener, 2009). Studies have found that there is an upper ceiling beyond which money ceases to increases SWB (Diener & Biswas-Diener, 2002).

Education is one of the primary reason for the society to develop and prosper. Studies have found education as a favorable predictor of SWB (Cuñado & de Gracia, 2012). Education brings stability, maturity, and a sense of internal locus of control in controlling the

fate of the life, which infuses PA. However, when this aspiration goes beyond one's personal capacity to cope and achieve, leads to dissatisfaction (Clark & Oswald, 1996).

3.3 Personality Variables and SWB

Personality is one of the defining variable for SWB as studies have reported that SWB is strongly correlated with stable personality traits (Diener et al., 2003). Lykken & Tellegen (1996) even reported that SWB is primarily determined by our inborn predispositions. Among the personality factors, extraversion and neuroticism have been found as important predictors for PA and NA (Diener & Lucas, 1999). DeNeve & Cooper (1998) found that neuroticism (emotional instability) was the strongest negative predictor of life satisfaction and happiness, and a positive predictor of NA. Culture too play an influential role in determining SWB, considering its impact on the personality per se. In collectivistic countries, extroverts and agreeableness are the important predictors of SWB.

3.4 Mobile habits and SWB

In the present study, mobile habits refer to the use of smartphones and social networking sites (SNS) by the adolescents. Studies have reported mixed result of mobile habits on the SWB of adolescents (Orben & Przybylski, 2019; Schemer et al., 2020). Sensing the 24*7 use, absorption, dependence, and application of smartphones and social media in the life of adolescent, they have been referred to as '*digital adolescence'* (Ophir et al, 2020). Studies have found both positive and negative impact of SNS on mood, life satisfaction, and loneliness of adolescent through support-seeking and receiving positive feedback, receiving negative feedback, and social media ostracism (Webster et al., 2020).

4. Objectives:

1. To assess the impact of demographic variables on the adolescent subjective well-being.
2. To observe the relationship between various personality measures and subjective well-being among adolescents.
3. To discern the role of mobile and social media in adolescent subjective well-being.
4. To explore what make adolescents happy and enriches their subjective well-being.

5. Hypothesis:

1. There will be significant relationship between age and SWB among adolescents, with increasing age leading to less SWB.
2. There will be significant gender differences in SWB among adolescents, with females experiencing more SWB than their male counterparts.
3. There will be significant relationship between education and SWB among adolescents, with high education leading to high SWB.
4. There will be significant relationship between income and SWB among adolescents, with more income leading to high SWB.
5. Family typology will significantly impact adolescent's SWB.
6. There will be significant relationship between place of living and SWB among adolescents, with rural adolescent experiencing high SWB.
7. There will be significant relationship between personality and SWB, with adolescents high on extroversion, conscientiousness, agreeableness, and openness to experience tend to have higher SWB than their lower and neurotic counterparts.
8. Chronotype will significantly affect adolescent's SWB, with morning types experiencing higher SWB than neither and evening types.

9. Among neither and evening types, neither types tend to have high SWB.
10. Use of mobile and social media will significantly impact adolescent's SWB.

6. Proposed Framework:

6.1 Sample and Procedure

Data will be collected from over 400-500 adolescents from the Darbhanga, Madhubani, Sitamarhi, and Samastipur districts of North Bihar, collectively known as *Mithilanchal*. Students from various schools and colleges (both public and private) will be contacted and informed consent will be taken. The inclusion criteria will be age range from 10 to 24 years of age, which will be further divided into two adolescent groups: *early adolescents* (10-17 years) and *late adolescents* (18-24). The early adolescents group will cater to the school going students up to Std. XII and late adolescents will mark the official age for adults in India viz. 18 years and the beginning of the college years, where freedom and autonomy prevails to a larger extent.

Post-collection of that data, almost 50-100 students with high (low) SWB will be interviewed in their preferred language to ascertain the underlying causes of their SWB. This will shed light on various demographic, personality, and social factors from the subjective viewpoint.

6.2 Measures:

I. **Scale of Positive and Negative Experience (SPANE; Diener et al., 2010):** A 12-item 5-point likert scale ranging from *Very rarely or never* to *Very often or always*. The scale consists of 6-items each measuring positive affect and negative affect and ask participants to report their feelings over the period of last week.

II. **Satisfaction with Life scale (SWL; Diener et al., 1985):** A 5-item 7-point likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 7 (Strongly agree). One of the most used scales in positive psychology, participants are asked to report their cognitive judgement of life in terms of the satisfaction.

III. **Flourishing Scale (Diener et al., 2010):** Added as the fourth component to measure the cognitive evaluation of life, the 8-item 7-point likert scale range from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 7 (Strongly agree).

IV. **Ten-Item Personality Inventory (TIPI; Gosling, Rentfrow, & Swann, 2003):** The TIPI scale is one of the shortest scale to measure the big five personality factors. Each factor is assessed by two items, where one is positively keyed and another negatively keyed. Participants are required to report how the items are applied to them using a 7-point scale from 1 (Disagree strongly) to 7 (Agree strongly).

V. **Morningness-Eveningness Questionnaire (MEQ; Horne & Ostberg, 1976):** One of the most popular and gold-standard measure to know the chronotype preference is Horne & Ostberg's 19-items questionnaire. The scale asked participant to report their sleep-wake cycle, their best time of the day, and preference for the time to do various activities of the day.

VI. **Smartphone Addiction Scale-Shorter version (SAS-SV; Kwon et al., 2013):** A 10-item scale to measure the addiction of smartphones in adolescents.

VII. **Social Media Engagement Scale for Adolescents (SMES-A; Ni et al., 2020):** A 15-item scale to measure the engagement of adolescents in social media on three dimensions: cognitive, emotional, and behavioral.

In due period of time, if any other scale found suitable, will be incorporated in the thesis. Apart from the scale, participants will be asked questions pertaining to their subjective mobile habits viz. time, timing of the day, motivational factors, and so on.

6.3 Statistical Tools:

As aforementioned, the study will incorporate mixed research - quantitative and qualitative methodology. In quantitative methods, mean, SD, chi-square will be computed. Pearson correlation (r), t-test, and multiple regression will be calculated between variables to gauge the relationship, significant differences, and prediction. The impact of demographic variables, personality variables, and mobile habits (*independent variables*) will be assessed on the various components of SWB of adolescents (*dependent variable*) viz., positive affect, negative affect, satisfaction with life, and flourishing.

The qualitative part of data analysis will incorporate **content analysis** in order to ascertain the underlying sources of happiness and unhappiness among the sample with higher and lower SWB respectively. The data will be coded into various emerging themes.

6.4 Implications of the Study:

As per my knowledge, this study is one of its kind in the Northern Bihar *(Mithilanchal)* where adopting the mixed methodology, the participants and their stories of happiness will lead the research. Traditionally, Bihar has been a rural state where nearly 88% percent of population lives in rural area (Census, 2011). Not surprisingly, agriculture forms the backbone of the

Bihar. Mithilanchal is historically known for the cultivation of brains and intellect since ages. Moreover, the cultural bastion of Bihar, Madhubani is globally known for *Madhubani painting*; Darbhanga for *Makahana cultivation* and *Sikki-Art*; Sitamarhi for *spiritual tourism*. As mentioned in the beginning, Bihar is the second most youthful state of India and given its demographics dividend where many Biharis are well-placed in other parts of India and the world, this study will bring into light the correlates of SWB and the latent sources of happiness. This will in-turn helps the government, policymakers, mental health practitioners, civil societies, organizations such as world bank, UNESCO, UNICEF, NGOs and the think tanks that operates on the larger level to understand the evolving dynamics of the adolescents and youths of Bihar. Many of school-goers, who are residing in the interiors and are unheard hitherto, will be catered and their own stories of happiness amid the nature and environment will be streamlined. The study will undertake the emic perspective and consequently, the cultural components will be addressed promptly.

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